

## WARNING SIGNS OF INFECTION

*Why is it important for me to recognize signs of infection?*

Wound infections are dangerous. An infected wound can grow and lead to amputation. If the infection travels into your bloodstream, your life could be in danger. It is important that you realize this so that you know to seek emergency medical help if necessary. The Wound Healing team is here to help you, 24 hours a day and 7 days a week, whenever you need us.

The following warning signs can indicate an infection:

- **Drainage** is any liquid coming out of the wound or through intact skin. An increased quantity of drainage, changes in color, or changes in smell are of concern.
- **Pain** can indicate worsening infection, particularly if it increases suddenly.
- **Redness or darkening** of the skin surrounding the wound.
- **Warmth** of the skin surrounding the wound
- **Swelling** around the wound site
- **New breaks** in the skin
- **Increase** in the size of the wound
- **Bad smell**
- **Fever**
- **Feeling ‘unwell,’** like when you have the flu

If you notice **any** of these signs of infection call 212-932-4325 for advice, or go to the emergency room. Do not delay in seeking help.

Certain patients are at particularly high risk of problems from infection.

- Your immune system is weak. If this is the case, your body may not create a normal amount of inflammation in response to infection. You may not have the same amount of redness, pain, or fevers as a person with normal immune function would have. Therefore, you may not even realize you have an infection until it is advanced. Patients in this category include:
  - Patients with diabetes
  - Patients taking steroid pills or steroid shots
  - Patients who have had a transplant
  - Patients with HIV
  - Patients who are elderly
  - Patients with advanced kidney failure

- Patients with advanced liver disease
- Patients who are malnourished
- Patients with cancer
- Patients with any other illnesses that weaken the immune system
- You cannot feel the area where your wound is. If this is the case, you may not notice changes in the wound. Nerve damage can also limit how much redness and inflammation your body shows at the wound site.
- You have other medical problems, such as heart disease or breathing problems. If you have serious medical problems, then your body will have more difficulty fighting an infection; so it's particularly important to catch the infection early.

*What do I do if I have questions?*

If you have any questions regarding the warning signs of infection, please call us immediately at 212-932-4325, at any time. You can also find information at our website:

[www.ColumbiaWoundHealing.org](http://www.ColumbiaWoundHealing.org).